

OCTAGON HOUSE

BY PHOEBE ATWOOD TAYLOR

The Story So Far: Asy Mayo, Cape Cod detective, is investigating the murder of Marina Lorne, whose husband's post office moral has aroused Quammet. She was killed by a left handed blow from her sister's knife. Asy knows Pam Frye is innocent, as well as Tim Carr, booster at the Frye's Octagon House. Marina was married to Tim, unknown to Jack Lorne, and also had played around with Roddy Strutt, who is now being "menaced." Then the barn burns down, Tim and Asy are knocked out in the woods, and Pam's father is found unconscious in the Lorne's cottage. The problem uppermost in Asy's mind is a \$50,000 lump of ambergris Pam found the day of the murder. Pam says she hid it in the coal bin. Aaron Frye says he moved it to the barn!

Chapter 29

Upset And Downcast

THE bells of Quammet's three churches were pealing out their summons the next morning as Asy and Pam emerged from Aaron Frye's bedroom and slowly descended the stairs. The instant the bells stopped, Aaron's locks burst into their tirade—

Peggy Boone, who had been waiting with Mrs. Carr in the circular hallway, covered her ears with her hands.

"I hope Aaron's better," she had so well to make herself heard above the "Pam" and "Asy" that she got to get out! Those clocks!

"Poor girl," Mrs. Carr said sympathetically as Peggy rushed away. "The clocks nearly drove her crazy last night. They both tried me at first, but I used to em. She says she woke up on the hour every hour, and just as she got to sleep the half hour rolled around. She looks exhausted."

"The cumulative effect is shattering," Pam said, "I hate the clocks myself. So does Peg. But Father enjoys—"

"How is he? What can I do, Pam? If only I'd known about him last night, and could have helped—"

"I'll never forgive Tim for letting me think all the to-do was over those troopers! Never! Can't I read him the Sunday papers, or something? Is he well enough?"

"You might take him up the funny parts," Pam said.

"But should he laugh?" Mrs. Carr demanded. "Won't it be bad for him to laugh?"

"He won't laugh," Pam told her with finality. "Don't you worry, he won't laugh! He not only can't laugh, but he doesn't want to. He wouldn't laugh if he were in the best of health, the pinkest of the pink."

Pam followed Asy into the study and threw herself wearily on the couch.

"In all honesty," she said, "can you find any small vestige of silver lining, Asy?"

"Wa-el," Asy said, "Aaron's aw is broken, an' that tooth can be replaced, an' his ankle'll be all right in a few days. An' when you consider what happened to Marina, it's nice to know nothin' worse happened to him."

"I didn't mean about Father— I know it's a holy wonder he's here. I'm thinking about the ambergris. Oh, Asy, that ambergris! I wasn't going to tell Father until he felt better, but the minute his eyes opened after Cummings' spell wore off, he raised himself up and peered out of the window and saw the ruins of the barn. And then of course I had to tell. I wish the place had been insured. Somehow it would have consoled me just to get \$50 out of the mess. I'd settle for ten, cash—Asy, why do you look so enigmatical?"

"Didn't know that I was," Asy returned. "I'm just sort of wrestling an' juggling things over in my head, an' I ain't responsible for what it does to my facial expressions."

Goose Burns Goose

"WHAT is there to wrestle about?" Pam asked. "The ambergris is gone. There you are. That's that. I suppose I should be a brave girl and stick out my chin and say I don't care, better luck next time, it's courage to face facts—aren't there lots of worthy sentiments for misfortune and defeat? And all I could think of when I found the ambergris—was it only the day before yesterday? It seems like 50 years. Anyway all I could think of when I found it was 'Gee! Now I can prattle about counting chickens before they're hatched, and fools' paradises, and—oh, damn! Asy! Damn, damn, damn!'"

"I dunno," Asy said. "I don't think it's as bad as all that."

"Oh, I still have my health!" Pam retorted savagely. "I know. Father will be well in a few days, and I still have my health. Good old health! Think of all the poor Spaniards and the poor Chinese and the unemployed and the distressed areas—sure. We still have our health, and we still have what passes for a roof over our heads. Untold thousands would consider us heavily endowed. Overburdened with fortune. Dear me, yes!"

Asy grinned at her. "Stop being so sorry for yourself," he said, "an' cause an' reflect. Why was the barn burned down?"

"For all I know," Pam said,

"someone wanted to toast a marshmallow."

"The barn got burned," Asy said, "because someone wanted me—or anyone at Octagon House who might know about the ambergris—they waited us to rush to and save it from possible flames, thus pointin' it out, so that the someone could get a line on its location."

"Weren't they fooled?" Pam said bitterly. "What's the old adage about the goose and the golden eggs? It'd make a nice headline, Goose burns goose."

"Yup," Asy said. "But would the goose have started the fire an' burned the barn without a nice careful investigation first? Don't be silly."

Pam sat upright on the couch. "Asy!"

"Well, would they off? Would you? I wouldn't, myself, an' I give this fellow credit. If he had brains enough to think of burnin' down the barn to find out where the ambergris was, he had brains enough to make sure he wasn't burnin' up the ambergris in the process."

"But if that's so—no, it won't work out, Asy. Father found it in the coal bin when he went down for coal for the kitchen stove Friday night. The cops were all over the place—whose car is that outside? The cops? And, by the way, if it is, what's Hanson's attitude toward me?"

"He's too upset about them two missin' troopers of his to have attitudes," Asy said. "Don't worry about him. That's the doc car. I'd know the sound of that coffee grinder anywhere. I'll bring him in."

"Belt n' the Jaw"

CUMMINGS strode into the study and dumped his inevitable black bag down on the table.

"The recuperative powers of this village," he announced, "are amazing, simply amazing. The litterer's cleaned up, the carnival atmosphere has faded, and Quammet's going to church as sedately as if things had happened in two other towns entirely. If I hadn't seen that riot yesterday with my own eyes, I wouldn't believe it was this place. How's Aaron, pretty unhappy?"

"His jaw looks better," Pam said, "and the swelling on his ankle has gone down. I think most of his present suffering is mental. He's soot the barn."

"He had to know sooner or later," Cummings said. "But I'd imagine it would add to his suffering. He thought he was doing such a big thing, to put the ambergris right away in the barn for you—oh, Asy. We didn't need to use the sea serpent—"

"The what?" Pam demanded. "What sea serpent?"

"Asy's idea," Cummings explained, "for distracting public interest. We didn't need it. One of the Barn Players punched another Barn Player, and Senator Hemmingswell's sons cracked up their roadster, and there's a poggy boat ashore on Black Gull Bar. Between 'em, the reporters are having a field day. I don't think they'll be around you for a while. But orders have been given to have the serpent spotted the minute the present attractions die down. You better see the Hotties, speaking of attractions. Piously going to church, dripping black crepe from every pore."

"All set, no doubt," Pam commented, "to pray for my soul. I know that crepe. It's a part of the Good Woman act, and she's worn it to every funeral since I can remember."

"Well, she had her picture taken with the minister on the steps," Cummings said, "and then dropping a dime into the foreign mission box. I hear it's the first time she ever dropped in anything—Is Aaron really badly broken up over the ambergris?"

Pam nodded. "He's utterly downcast about it, and he knows I am, too. And even if I could pack my voice with conviction and tell him not to worry, it doesn't matter, he'd still be downcast. And every time he looks toward the window, his eyes get all watery—"

"Were the X-rays all right?" Asy asked.

"Yes, I drove over again just now. Nothing's broken, though I'm sure I don't know why not. I think it was that tooth that messed things up so, and added such a gory touch—have you found out yet what actually happened to him?"

"We've pieced most of it together," Asy said. "When he walked out back in the woods with Tim Carr and his grandmother, he thought he saw someone lurking in the bushes. He slipped off without sayin' 'anythin' an' tried to investigate the matter on his own. He thought he saw someone sneak into Jack Lorne's house—didn't have on his long distance glasses so he couldn't be sure, but he followed anyway. He went in, an' someone was waitin' for him by the door, an' give him that belt or the jaw. He didn't see the person it all happened too quick, in fallin', he went head over heels down the cellar steps an' he fell off the entry. That accounts for his ankle an' the general abrasions an' contusions he's got."

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Asy decides on motives, tomorrow

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

WE ARE LIVING IN THE ICE AGE!
THE HUGE GLACIAL SHEETS CHARACTERIZING THIS GEOLOGIC PERIOD HAVE NOT YET DISAPPEARED!
REMNANTS EXIST IN SWITZERLAND, NEW ZEALAND, TASMANIA AND GREENLAND...



ANTONIO SIRADIVARI—
Famous Italian Violin maker, WOULD NOT SIGN INSTRUMENTS HE MADE LATE IN LIFE FOR FEAR HIS FAILING EYESIGHT MIGHT OVERLOOK SOME FLAW! -18th century-

THE ROCK RABBIT IS NOT A RABBIT!
IT IS PROPERLY A HYRAX, NATIVE TO AFRICA...

Modern Ice Age
Reference to the Ice Age ordinarily inspires the thought of some vague period buried in the dim pages of forgotten history. Yet strange as it seems, we are living in the Ice Age this very minute!

This remarkable episode in the earth's history is believed to have begun at least 50,000 years ago, when great glacial blankets buried North America, Europe and other sections of the globe under their icy stillness.

The cause of the Ice Age is disputed. Some writers offer the opinion that at one time the areas affected were at a higher elevation than they are today, and that snow consequently lay there the year around, forming the great glacial sheets.

Another hypothesis is that variations in the eccentricity of the earth's path around the sun once caused northern winters to fall when the earth was farthest from the sun, instead of nearest to it, as happens today.

Regardless of the cause, great ice sheets formed in three different sections of North America, in Europe and elsewhere. They completely covered Canada and the northwestern part of the United States from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi, the Great Lakes, the whole of New England, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania and part of New Jersey.

The whole of northern Europe was covered at some places reaching a depth of 800 feet. Eight million square miles of north America and 2,250,000 square miles of Europe were under ice.

Although some 20,000 years have passed since the last general retreat of these ice sheets, remnants remain in Switzerland, New Zealand, Tasmania and Greenland. Some geologists claim these vast ice sheets may return, on the assumption that we live today in an inter-glacial period.

Rock Rabbits
Native to African shores of the Red Sea, the tiny hyrax, which looks like a rabbit, but is not, has as its nearest relative the elephant and rhinoceros by virtue of anatomical structure.

Tomorrow: How did July get its name?

Germans Protest Insult To Hitler
TORONTO, June 30.—(Canadian Press)—C. G. Kropp, German consul, protested today to Mayor Ralph Day against a recent remark by Alderman William Croft that the "Toronto zoo was so dirty" "the only thing I'd put in there would be Hitler."

Kropp said he had been instructed by Dr. Erich Windels, German consul general at Ottawa, on behalf of the German government, to request that "the offensive remarks be withdrawn."

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Fixed!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Purchaser?



THE NEBBS—Loud Speaker



550-Pound Oracle On Weather Dies
BOAZ, Ala., June 30.—(AP)—Walt Cagle, Sand mountain's 550-pound weather prophet, died today at his farm home near here.

Cagle's appearances in Boaz were holiday occasions. Thousands swarmed into town just to see him.

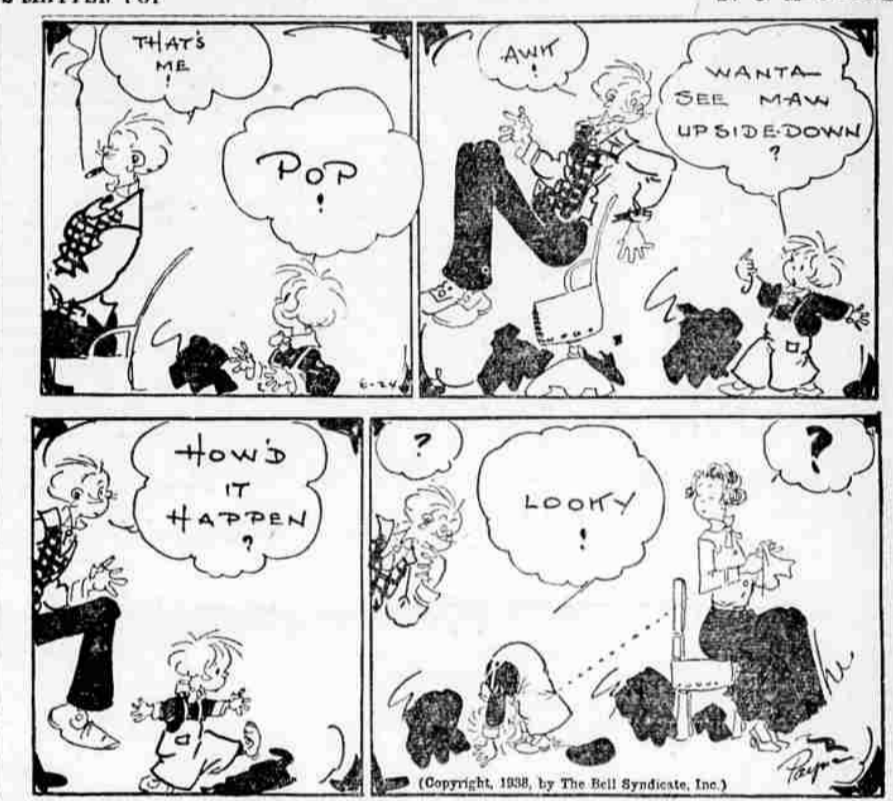
COACH

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POI

By G. M. PAYNE



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOL HESS



1938 SPRING PIG CROP 13 PER CENT GREATER THAN PREVIOUS YEAR

WASHINGTON, June 30.—(AP)—The agriculture department estimated today the 1938 spring pig crop was 13 per cent greater than that of a year ago and that the number of sows to farrow in the fall would be 9 per cent greater than last fall.

The spring pig production was estimated at 43,300,000 head, or 4,900,000 head more than last spring. Not since 1933 has the crop reached that figure, the department said.

The largest increase in production—17 per cent—was reported in west north central states, including much

of the western corn belt. Increase of 11 per cent in east north central states, 7 per cent in south Atlantic, 15 per cent in south central and 2 per cent in western states were reported.

The department estimated the number of sows to farrow this fall at 4,102, an increase of 349,000 over the fall of 1937.

The department said average production in the fall would give a 1938 pig crop of about 68,000,000 head, an increase of about 7,000,000 head over 1937 production.

550-Pound Oracle On Weather Dies

BOAZ, Ala., June 30.—(AP)—Walt Cagle, Sand mountain's 550-pound weather prophet, died today at his farm home near here.

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